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AGRICULTURAL PROGRESS IN THE SOUTH ^{/1}

By
Reuben Brigham
Assistant Director of Extension Work
United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

CONTENTS

	Page
No substitute for the truth	1
Human facts	3
No mass production of livestock	4
Direct aid	5
Business leadership speaks	7
Poultry brings profits	8
Businessmen with vision	8
Opportunities	10
Extension Service is with you	10

May I express at the outset, my sincere appreciation of the opportunity afforded me by your Association and by your persuasive program manager, Wendell Black, of Mississippi, to discuss with your important group the subject of agricultural progress in the South. You represent, gentlemen, the dynamic leadership of the South, which has forged the tools of industry and commerce; while I on my part shall attempt to bring to you the plain, unembroidered thinking and viewpoint of the men and women of our southern farms.

And so, as I proceed to discuss the agricultural progress of the South, I ask you to be generous when I place some of the questions which face agriculture right on your doorstep.

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE TRUTH

Through the genius of your industrial chemists, you have transmuted the proverbial sow's ear into a silk purse; but there is no substitute for the truth, and if the progress which has been made in southern agriculture is to be capitalized upon - if it is to be carried forward in a coordinated, consistent manner, you yourselves must accept a greater part of the responsibility for planning and consummation than has been hitherto the case. Your

^{/1}---Given before the Southern Commercial Secretaries' Association, Richmond, Va., April 28, 1939.

organizations possess the alert intelligence and sense of direction which must be focused upon the interdependent problems of agriculture and industry if poverty is not to be the farmers' portion and diminishing profits, the lot of industry.

Your taproots go deep into the soil. You are as much a part of the land as the man who turns the furrow. Your demonstrated concern in all that promises a greater South - a more humane social economy - is borne out by your efforts in the past to restore and build and create.

As I scan the last quarter of a century in the history of southern agriculture - it was 25 years ago that our Extension Service as a national movement became a part of your rural life - I see where this effort of your Government to help the southern farmers has borne fruit. All of us can see there has come a more stable farm life for thousands; that there has been a slow yet steadily forward movement, but the goal - a sound agricultural system, is still far from accomplished.

There has been progress. But, progress, like beauty, is only relative, and though southern farmers have been enabled to improve the technique of growing crops; improve livestock; and combat some of the enemies of the soil, of health, of crops, and of livestock; though the young and old among those who dwell upon the land have been given the instruments to make living a little more wholesome and inspiring - I am sometimes almost discouraged by the vast number of things yet to be done and that are necessary and humanly possible to do. Here, gentlemen, is where your chambers of commerce and your individual bent for organization must fit into the picture if the prosperity and the reasonable security of investment which, naturally, you desire are to be achieved.

As Secretary Wallace has said so wisely: "In the long run, there can be no prosperity in a State or a Nation that does not include farm prosperity."

I do not have to tell you that your southern farmer's purchasing power, which is the foundation of southern industry, is deplorably low in comparison with industry's ability to supply the farmer's needs. Of course, as a matter of good business management, industry aspires to satisfy these needs. I am asking if you cannot evolve, through your organizational activities, workable methods correcting this situation? I know you won't consider me impertinent when I suggest that this appears to be a first and paramount step. If you are successful, you know that the effort will be profitable.

There is no need for me to bombard you with a mass of statistics, for each secretary here is familiar with the general situation in his own bailiwick. It makes no difference whether the leprous white hand of a cotton-cash complex is blighting the living and the land, or a condition of too prevalent undernourishment still shackles both rural and urban progress. The human angle is identical. The basic idea of farm life is, first of all, that the land shall produce enough to maintain the family and the stock. But southern farm life is still a long way from even this goal.

HUMAN FACTS

Here are a few salient facts, human facts, I might say, which I submit for your thoughtful consideration:/2

(1) Pork, beef, oats, hay, potatoes, butter, and eggs are imported by many sections in the Southern States.

(2) There are more than 850,000 farm families in the South that have no milk cows.

(3) There are more than 1,000,000 farm families that do not produce their own meat.

(4) There are more than 384,000 farm families that have no poultry.

(5) There are more than 746,000 farm families in the South that have neither a home garden nor a home orchard.

What this means to you is obvious. These necessities of life must be bought out of the pathetically small cash income of the average southern farmer; and that means decreased purchasing power, most important to you if the wheels of your industries are to be kept efficiently turning and your investments are to remain productive.

I think you will agree with me that right here opportunity sticks up before the southern business consciousness like a red traffic light. Do you not believe that every chamber of commerce policy would do well to include as one of its major objectives the fostering and encouragement of long overdue adjustments in the farming of its community? Such adjustments are imperative if our farmers are to improve their standards of living through increasing their cash income and producing more of their necessities from the home acres.

With the faculty possessed by secretaries to gather and analyze figures, there is not a chamber of commerce represented in this meeting today but could make a survey of the rural area of which it is the hub and produce practical information, and then establish attainable objectives. This effort would bring you into a field in which, you, gentlemen, have no near competitors - that of economic promotion.

However, when you chamber of commerce executives are moved by a sense of responsibility to your agricultural area and a desire to stimulate its income, I hope you will then also consider the wise thinking of that seventeenth century philosopher, Pasquier Quesnel. He said, "Zeal is very blind, or badly regulated when it encroaches upon the rights of others."

/2 United States Census of Agriculture - 1935.

NO MASS PRODUCTION OF LIVESTOCK

I have in mind the ambition in certain areas of the South to promote on a large scale livestock production as a commercial investment. Now I know that it is part of the code of ethics held to by you chamber of commerce secretaries, not to seek to acquire industries belonging to your neighbors. And, any concerted and sudden effort toward mass production of livestock in the Southern States would quickly bring serious protests and reprisals from your own brother secretaries, as well as from the producers in areas where the livestock industry is well established and where production costs are far below any that we can reasonably hope to meet in the South.

I know that in your industrial field you do not advocate setting up machinery for manufacturing or fabricating commodities until you are assured of a constant supply of raw materials. Do you not think it would be well to hesitate before going into high gear on commercial livestock expansion until the South is able to produce, in sufficient quantities, the forage crops which it now lacks and which are necessary to produce beef? It would seem, gentlemen, the part of wisdom in exploring and expanding the livestock industry first to put cows on your cowless family farms and to encourage the growing of adequate feed for them.

During the last few years, Louisiana farmers, in cooperation with the Extension Service, have placed approximately 2,000 purebred Hereford bulls on their farms as the first step in eradicating scrub bulls. This has had a decided effect on the bovine production of the State, and large numbers of good-grade calves of excellent conformation are being sold at less than a year old at a price range of \$20 to \$25. Linked with this conservative program is a system of pasture and forage crop improvement and better use of rice and cotton byproducts.

However, as one who has seen the landscape dotted with monuments to "lost hopes" in agricultural promotion, I should like to offer a word of caution: "The saddest word of tongue or pen is, it hadn't ought to have been." There are many sections in the Southern States where, for example, the tung tree has been greatly overplanted at high initial cost. But, no self-respecting tung tree, gentlemen, in the face of surplus production will ever drop its oily nuts with profit to the grower. If the facilities of the Extension Service had been sought before the hopeful tung-tree owners had gambled, it might be that slash pines would now be growing in that light sandy soil, and a triumph of the native over the immigrant would be recorded, since during the year just past slash pines in comparable soil have recorded a profitable selling price.

Some 20 or 25 years ago, self-appointed, high-powered missionaries sang a Lorelei song to the farmers in many parts of the South: "Silos will be the direct road to an agricultural Utopia," and now, in many places - far too many places - silos still point heavenward silent and empty.

In every one of the Southern States your chambers of commerce already are trail blazers in a realistic movement which we believe presages the dawn of a brighter day for the man on the farm.

The field of our mutual endeavor in advancing the improvement of southern agriculture, as I see it, is limited only by our perspective. It has taken form in annual get-together banquets at which the chamber plays host to the farmers; constructive prizes and awards to boys and girls doing outstanding work with all branches of agriculture. Where commercial organizations have underwritten the distribution of purebred stock or standard-bred poultry, it has been a modest investment which has paid the community compound interest.

You are familiar with the small cooperative hog markets, established by the county agents in North Carolina, and, in towns, with the assistance given in varying degree by the local chamber or board of trade. In Fayetteville, my lifetime friend, Frank H. Jeter, agricultural editor of the North Carolina State College, was a guest speaker at a Kiwanis Club - and his subject was Hogs. His words fell on fertile soil, for a packer representative has been placed at the North Carolina city and buys hogs daily. Pork on the hoof has meant \$2,000,000 in cold cash to the farmers of eastern North Carolina in the last 12 months.

DIRECT AID

There are so many methods of direct aid which your organizations can offer to your farmer neighbors that I want to bring out into the open a few of the problems for which a method of approach must be sought by all of us.

(1) The population in the Southern States is increasing rapidly. In fact, some counties of the southern Appalachian area will probably double in the next 25 years, if there is no migration. We shall have to be concerned with finding employment, homes, subsistence, and cultural advantages for these future citizens, and, at the same time, we must meet the issue of the thousands who now and later will come to us seeking employment and a living.

(2) I feel it is important that you should have a clear understanding of the land-use programs and the soil-conservation procedure upon which the country has embarked, for out of these two will come replenishment of the sources that ultimately will give to you many of your basic raw materials.

There is no doubt in the minds of observing people that American farmers are on the march in one of the greatest rural movements of all time. And I feel that one of the most constructive things you commercial-organization secretaries can do is to get the facts about this movement from your own local farm leaders in order that you may enlist the intelligent support of your own businessmen for programs that mean so much to farmers and to businessmen.

How widespread is the sentiment regarding problems of agriculture I think I can best picture to you by quoting a paragraph which was placed on my desk just before I came to Richmond. I quote:

"Is there any reason why the agriculturist should not be on an equality with the manufacturer in the matter of maintaining a command on the selling price of his products? No one complains of the manufacturer protecting himself but many people object to any restriction in agricultural production on the ground that we have no right to curtail the bounties of nature so long as there are people in the world who need more food. These people ignore two facts. First, that nature, unassisted, does not produce bounteous harvests. She enables man, by his industry to produce bounteous harvests. Quite a different thing. Secondly, uncontrolled production increases the number of people in want instead of helping those already in want. The ghastly effect of unbalanced production of agricultural products during the recent crisis is staring us in the face. Very large numbers of farmers all over the world have been reduced to penury and, as a direct result, millions of people in industrial countries like our own, have gone to swell the unemployment lists. The only hope of being able to distribute more food to those with an insufficiency is to achieve world prosperity. Whatever other factors there may be world prosperity cannot be realized unless there is established and maintained a balance of purchasing power between producers." /3

Those words were not the expression of some crusading altruist. They did not come out of any Department of Agriculture conference. On the contrary, they represent the viewpoint of one of the oldest and most conservative business groups in the world - the Chamber of Commerce of Birmingham, England. In meeting last February, this organization of British industrialists discussed conditions affecting what they called "primary producers." I will only add to the quoted paragraph one line from the result of this meeting:

"It is obvious that our trade is dependent on the prosperity of our customers."

(3) In many sections of the South you have all the factors required for a reasonably secure farm income, and yet, as some of you have told me, personally, your ablest farmers are insolvent. I think there you will find cutthroat competition in marketing, excessive credit costs, and a commodity distribution system which still does not know we have discarded the ox and cart. Those are essentially your business problems, but agriculture is paying the excess cost.

/3 Wheat Advisory Committee, Circular No. 27, Bush House, London, W.C. 2, February 8, 1939.

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP SPEAKS

Right here I offer to those who may think that big cash crops are the open road to national prosperity, the trenchant analysis of one of the leaders in American industry, Charles R. Hook, Chairman of the National Association of Manufacturers. Addressing the National Farm Institute at Des Moines, last February, Mr. Hook said, in part, "Probably the most basic tenet of American industry is that production makes jobs. From a study of historical fact, it would seem that this had been true in the case of agriculture."

He then drew a vivid comparison between the employment created through the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam, whose weight he estimated to be twenty-three million tons, and the yearly average tonnage of corn, wheat, and oats in 13 large-crop years which exceeded the 13 small-crop years by twenty-six million tons.

"Thus a big crop did make jobs," continued Mr. Hook. "They meant twenty-six million tons more a year to be handled by harvest machinery and labor; it is thirteen million more trips from farm to market with a two-ton truck. It will load 514,000 freight cars from terminal markets to processors, and then be reloaded and shipped to retailers for distribution. Yes, production did make jobs.

"What industry must realize, however, is that large crops that make more jobs in manufacturing and transportation and do not return to agriculture corresponding economic benefits, are not in the end nationally helpful."

I have found that most of the men in your vocation are optimistic by inheritance, inclination, and association, which makes your optimism unanimous. Being somewhat old-fashioned, as you may have observed, I prefer an optimist to a pessimist. I have never forgotten the distinction made between the two, by one of the officers of the United States Chamber of Commerce, several years back. "A pessimist," said he, "is one who sees a difficulty in an opportunity, but an optimist sees an opportunity in a difficulty."

Depressing as must be some of the known, unpleasant facts concerning southern agriculture, I hold with you in your faith in the latent power of southern leadership - business and farm - and I consider all the disturbing, confusing social maladjustments that have focused national attention on the South as a multiple challenge to all of us.

Let me turn to recent developments in three or four phases of agriculture that are finding wide and profitable application in the South.

Within 25 years, your flocks of sheep - the "golden hoof of Old England," have increased from 4,000,000 to over 11,000,000. In the same period of time, milk cows have gone from over 4,000,000 to almost 6,000,000.

POULTRY BRINGS PROFITS

The American people at large, particularly the gourmets, have always felt that a proper coat-of-arms for the Southern States would be a frying chicken couchant, on a skillet rampant. Though there was and still is a dearth of farm poultry flocks, there is this cheerful news which I may sound - the agile hen, either by direct action or through proxy, has been scratching holes in the wet blanket of depression and low family farm income. The Southern States are cooperating 100 percent in the National Poultry Improvement Plan. The poultry census of 1938 tells us there were more than 103,000,000 hens on southern farms; 11 Southern States reported 358 hatcheries with an egg capacity of over 11-1/2 million eggs, which took eggs from 7,366 selected flocks. This is something to crow or cackle over, for the hen has gone, in 15 or 20 years, from the status of a denizen of the dunghill to a leader in community activities. Where once we had "carefully reared" fighting cocks for our cockpits, the South now has established a "bull market" on standard-bred poultry and heavy egg-producing strains.

Commercial production of broilers - the penthouse title for milk-fed frying chickens, has gone forward by leaps and bounds. Areas, such as the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia and the northwestern corner of Arkansas are supplying the northern markets on a scale undreamed of 20 years ago. In many localities, including the home town of your program chairman, Mr. Black, there are thriving poultry plants, because they have, right at their doors, profitable local markets. I have mentioned only a few of the areas where this branch of poultry husbandry has stepped up local agricultural income and created new and convenient sources of food supplies for your urban centers.

Through the research and teaching practices of the Extension Service, sanitary control measures, which have made this progress possible, have been adopted in the Southern States. You can draw your own conclusions as to the future place of the poultry industry in stabilizing the South's agricultural income, if it is conservatively developed.

The utilization of southern timber for wood pulp, through chemurgic science, has tapped a new reservoir for agricultural income, has expanded local industry, and, if wisely and conservatively guided as part of a land-use program, promises increased assets in areas where heretofore the land and the timber have been liabilities.

BUSINESSMEN WITH VISION

Georgia has long been the scene of outstanding effort - an inspiration wherein the farmer, the financier, and the Extension worker have fused knowledge and energy into a successful agricultural program. There you have men like W. C. Vereen, of Colquitt County; Walter Harrison, of Franklin County; and John Graham, of Floyd County, initiating and carrying on long-range programs which have helped the farmers to outlast the depression and live successfully with the boll weevil. The Georgia State Bankers' Association

has carried on a marvelous cooperative program in the agricultural-credit field. One banker, alone, knows Georgia boys are good financial risks, because he underwrote the purchase of 50 calves for 50 boys to raise. And, the boys paid back the loan 100 percent!

This is human vision teamed up with initiative, and it will be more pronounced in the immediate future, I am sure, for there is nothing that promotes competition so greatly as does achievement.

This development in Georgia is strikingly paralleled by your brother bankers in Wisconsin. In the Badger State, the bankers' association and Andrew W. Hopkins, agricultural editor of the University of Wisconsin, have been cooperating for years in a program to improve agricultural practices. Editor Hopkins furnishes the rural banks with timely advertising copy covering agricultural subjects which the bankers' association carries in all the newspapers throughout the State and directs to the attention of their farm clients.

In Memphis, Tenn., you have thrilling evidence that the city recognizes its obligations to its rural neighbors. One of the Nation's outstanding newspapers - the Memphis Commercial Appeal, has grappled with the agricultural problem in an aggressive, realistic fashion. It has sponsored the "plant to prosper" movement - a contest in which the human equation counts the most. Here's how it works: In the Appeal's territory, which includes Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Missouri, a Missouri tenant, Mr. Bronson, entered this contest. He had neither garden, cow, nor chickens. And his home contained meager furnishings. His house yard was nothing to be proud of. But he was a cotton grower, and a good one, and employed the best methods that he could get from the agricultural extension office. In fact, all his methods of growing CASH crops were approved and were of high standard. Now, spurred on by the Commercial Appeal's contest, he has added a garden which gives his family a food supply. He has a cow, and there is milk and butter on his table; joints and side meat in his meat house; and chickens and eggs for the family use. These natural acquisitions have released money which flows directly back into local business channels. Consider the number of "Bronsons" within reach of the Commercial Appeal's sponsorship!

Miss Amy Kelly, State home demonstration agent in Missouri, speaking of this effort, says: "They have bought bedsteads, sheets, bedspreads, kitchen utensils, linoleum for the floor, and shoes for the children; there will be new shingles on the roof; a pump in the kitchen instead of the back-yard; and furniture, which includes tables and chairs."

In these logical programs for unified progress, you will find the Extension Service glad to work with urban as well as with rural groups for the benefit of all. Such action on the part of the men and women in the Extension Service is based on guiding principles not the least of which is encouraging initiative in the individual. This is the genesis of Extension Work, the hope of farm people, of our Nation, and of the democratic process.

We encourage voluntary cooperation between farm neighbors, whether of a community or of an entire county; and last, in the newer, and equally difficult phase of Extension Work, we encourage farm people to cooperate with nonrural neighbors, and State and National Governments. Only in this manner will those who live on the farms appreciate the problems of others and acquire understanding of State, National, and International situations. This comprehension is imperative if improvement is to continue in farm living conditions and in our national social economy.

According to the records of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture in 1934, 53 million more acres would have to be put into food and feed if all our people had a liberal diet, and our Bureau of Home Economics, in 1936, stated that if the diets of city people were raised to a first-class level, it would take 1/6 more eggs, 1/3 more milk, 1/5 more fruits, and 1/5 more vegetables.

Based on the standard of 715 pounds of vegetables per person being needed for good nutrition per year, 7,700,000,000 pounds of vegetables, if now available, would find undernourished potential users on southern farms. Calculated to have a value of 5 cents per pound, the home gardens of the South need right now to produce vegetables to the value of \$385,000,000.

Now I am not implying that you hard-worked secretaries should spend your vacations and your week ends in enthusiastic trips to the homes of your farmer friends and help to raise garden "sass," but I do want you to consider how much money would be released to flow into circulation channels of the cross-roads store and the larger city emporium if this original producer-to-consumer machinery were running in high gear. The farm family table is a market that pays retail prices without speculation.

OPPORTUNITIES

I want you secretaries to know that I look upon you as engineers of opportunity. There are countless ways in which you can employ your talent and skill, and many of these you already have fixed in your minds. These opportunities touch every class in the Southern States. Whether you wisely capitalize upon marginal land for the restoration of wildlife and your wholesome recreation, or, whether you see in the questioning faces of our farm boys and girls the men and women who will be in the van in the South's march of progress tomorrow, the response to constructive action on your part is certain to be prompt and effective.

EXTENSION SERVICE IS WITH YOU

Speaking on behalf of the Extension Service, I offer you a corps of men and women of technical training and experience and of genuine sympathy. They stand prepared and willing to serve as best they can the farm people of their communities in their effort and in your effort for the common good of a New South.

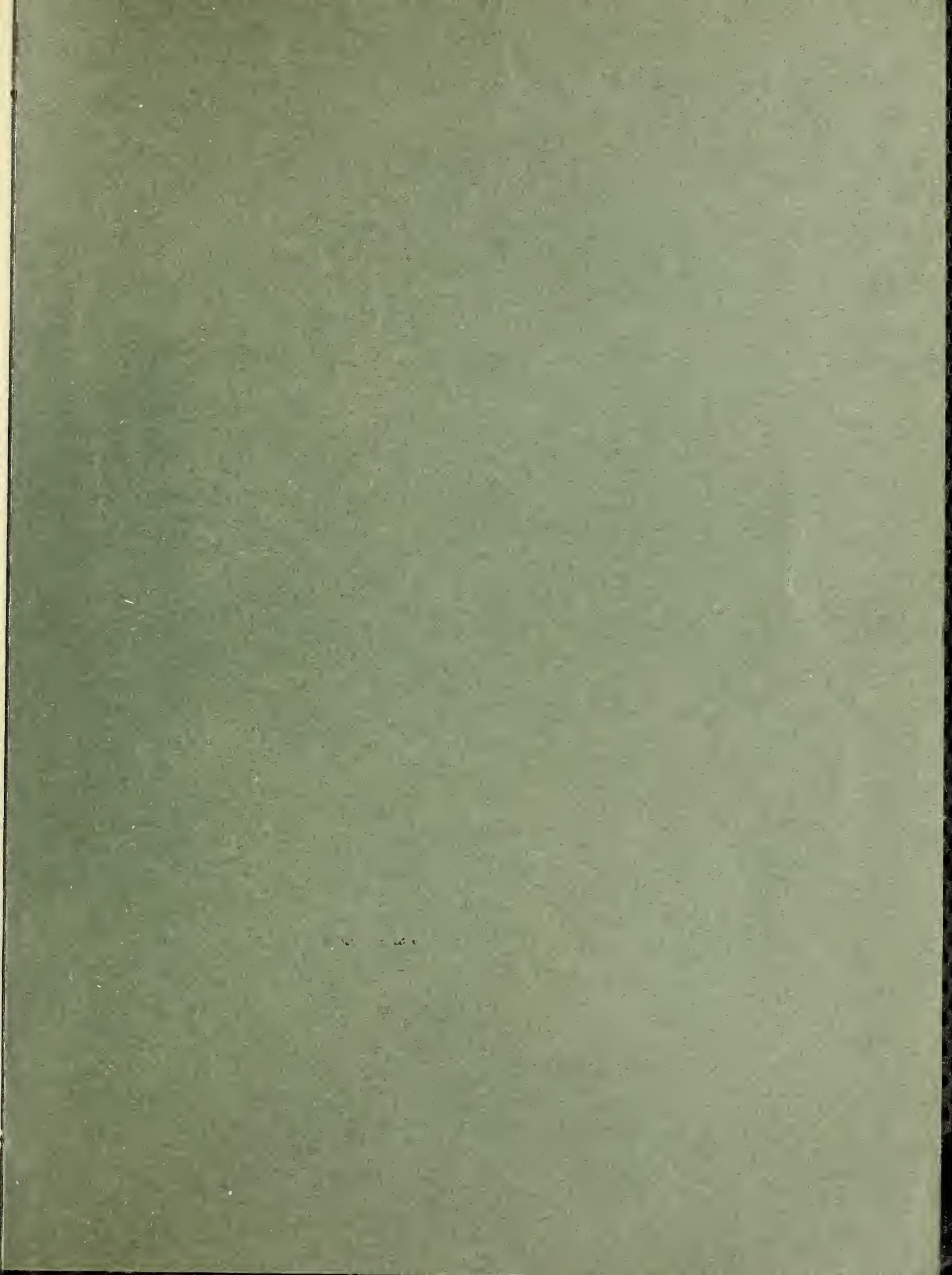
I have had to deal with my topic largely through a generalization, for agriculture in the South is a many-faceted thing; and yet, I would like to leave with each of you some thought - some phrase - to which your minds may revert when you return to your home folks.

When, in your own office, you face the necessity of finding a right road to agricultural and industrial prosperity for your community, you may be daunted by the size of the job. You may wonder desperately, as we often do, how you can best bring a larger measure of the things that make life worth living to the people of your community who look to you for leadership. In moments such as these, I would have you remember the courageous words of the immortal Henry Grady, of Georgia. Speaking in 1886 before the New England Society of New York, he said:

"The old South rested everything on slavery and agriculture, unconscious that these could neither give nor maintain healthy growth. The new South presents a perfect democracy, the oligarchs leading in the popular movement - a social system compact and closely knitted, less splendid on the surface, but stronger at the core - a hundred farms for every plantation, 50 homes for every palace - and a diversified industry that meets the complex needs of this complex age.

"The new South is enamored of her new work. Her soul is stirred with the breath of a new life. The light of a grander day is falling fair on her face. She is thrilling with the consciousness of growing power and prosperity. As she stands upright, full-statured, and equal among the people of the earth, breathing the keen air and looking out upon the expanded horizon, she understands that her emancipation came because through the inscrutable wisdom of God her honest purpose was crossed, and her brave armies were beaten."

If we hold fast to the challenging truth of the words of Henry Grady, not only will agricultural progress cover the South with its beneficent mantle, but prestige and glory - and the deep sense of satisfaction which flows from service well done in behalf of others will be ours.



Agricultural Progress in the South

Reuben Brigham



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

EXTENSION SERVICE

C. W. WARBURTON, *Director*

REUBEN BRIGHAM, *Assistant Director*
WASHINGTON, D. C.